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Delegate Filfred and Bears Ears Commission continue developing Bears Ears National Monument management plan

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Friday, Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Tecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) attended the Bears Ears Commission meeting regarding the continued development of the Bears Ears National Monument management plan, which included discussion over issues such as zoning and management roles.

According to the proclamation signed by former President Obama, the Bears Ears Commission was established to provide guidance and recommendations on the development and implementation of management plans, and on management of the monument. The commission consists of one elected official from the Navajo Nation, Hopi Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray, and Zuni Tribe, designated by the officers' respective tribes.

Delegate Filfred, who serves on the commission representing the Navajo Nation, said that current maps and zoning areas created by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management does not reflect significant cultural sites that are inherently sacred to each respective tribe within the park area.

"I would suggest that in terms of traditional knowledge, each tribe invite their spiritual leaders to engage in a cultural exchange, and to identify the areas that need to be protected. We need the federal officials to acknowledge these sacred sites so as to comply, and respect, indigenous life-ways that are present within Bears Ears," said Delegate Filfred.

During the week of June 26, Delegate Filfred and fellow Bears Ears Commission members will participate in site visits within the national monument area that will aid in mapping out cultural and ceremonial areas, as well as identify potential threats and any gaps that may conflict with cultural preservation.

Other zoning areas the commission will begin addressing are archeological, biodiversity protection, recreational, fuel-wood, and multiple use zones that include grazing, camping, ATV use, etc.

Delegate Filfred said that although Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke may issue a recommendation to repeal the national monument designation, or downsize the land area of the park, the Bears Ears Commission and advocacy organizations will continue aiding in developing the national monument management plan.

“The Bears Ears National Monument is still a monument and we need to treat operations as ‘business as usual,’ because regardless of what federal officials may recommend we have to keep pushing forward the management plan,” said Delegate Filfred. “We also need the people who support the monument to continue sending in public comments supporting Bears Ears.”

Delegate Filfred stated that the public comment period that specifically addresses the Bears Ears National Monument ended on May 26, however, the public still has until July 10 to submit a comment regarding Bears Ears in relation to President Trump’s executive order directing the U.S. DOI to review certain national monuments that were established since 1996.

The U.S. DOI is conducting the review under the Antiquities Act of 1906, and Sec. Zinke will use the review to determine whether each designation or expansion conforms to the policy stated within the executive order to formulate recommendations for Presidential actions, legislative proposals, or other appropriate actions to carry out that policy.

To submit a comment regarding the federal review of the national monuments, you may submit your comments to: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOI-2017-0002-0001>. The public comment period will end on July 10, 2017.

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